DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 079 661 CG 008 218

AUTHOR Piercy, Fred P.
TITLE Broadening the Scope of Elementary School Counseling: Some Adlerian Strategies.
PUB DATE 72
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Community Agencies (Public); Consultants; Consultation Programs; *Developmental Guidance; Elementary School Counseling; *Elementary School Counselors; Elementary School Guidance; *Environmental Influences; Family Counseling; Family Environment; Group Counseling; Guidance Centers; *Guidance Services; Models; Social Environment
IDENTIFIERS Adlerian Counseling

ABSTRACT

The elementary school counselor appears unable to provide adequate services for all children simply through individual and small group counseling. However, the educational, counseling, and consultative aspects of the Adlerian counseling model offer unlimited possibilities for expanding developmental guidance throughout each child's school and home environment. Since the child functions within a social environment, the Adlerian counselor emphasizes working with those with whom the child has direct contact. Several potentially far-reaching Adlerian strategies are presented which the elementary school counselor, whatever his psychological orientation, may find helpful in broadening the impact of developmental guidance. (Author)

ED 079661

Broadening the Scope of Elementary School Counseling: Some Adlerian Strategies

Fred P. Piercy

University of Florida

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CG 008 218

Broadening the Scope of Elementary School Counseling: Some Adlerian Strategies

Fred P. Piercy

The educational community is beginning to accept the elementary school counselor as a new breed of guidance personnel, one that is committed to the developmental, humanistic enrichment of the "normal" as well as the maladjusted child. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that the elementary school counselor is unable to provide adequate services for all children simply through individual and small group counseling. As a result, consulting and coordinating roles have been offered as indirect methods of providing developmental guidance for all children (ACES-ASCA Report, 1966). Althougn these roles are promising, they lack a solid underlying theoretical base from which to work.

There is a counseling model, however, which not only has a well tested conceptual framework, but appears to offer unlimited possibilities for making maximum use of the elementary school counselor's time: the Adlerian model (Hillman, 1967). Adlerian counseling usually focuses on short term individual and group contact with significant individuals in a child's life, rather than extended intensive counseling with the child him-

Fred Piercy is a doctoral student in counselor education at the University of Florida, Gainesville.

self. It is reasoned that since the child functions within a social environment, it is more expeditious to work directly with those with whom the child has direct contact. The Adlerian counselor helps these significant others to understand the purpose behind the child's behavior in order to encourage each child's healthy learning and living. The reader can find a thorough presentation of Adlerian theory in a number of recent works (e.g., Dinkmeyer, 1964; Dreikurs & Grey, 1968; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964).

The purpose of this paper is to present briefly several potentially far-reaching Adlerian strategies. It is hoped that they may prove practical to the elememtary school counselor, whatever his psychological orientation, in broadening the impact of guidance throughout the total school population.

The Adlerian Consultant

If significant persons in a child's life change their behavior toward that child, the child's behavior will also change (Kaczkowske, 1967). Realizing this, the Adlerian counselor understands the importance of consulting with teachers, administrators, and parents. As a consultant, he first examines each child's unique strategies of belonging to the group (e.g., family, classroom). Suggestions consistent with Adlerian theory are then offered for helping the child find his place within his social environment.

The impact of such consultation may be far-reaching indeed. For example, a teacher, through several consultations with the Adlerian counselor, may begin to understand the purposes behind

her students' behavior, and may become sensitive to certain children's mistaken notions. The teacher is then in an excellent position to begin to react constructively to all the children in her class. These few consultations may conceivably benefit a classroom of thirty children who are with the teacher for six hours a day. Certainly, such an approach is potentially more efficient and effective than one in which a counselor spends one half hour a week with only certain children.

In helping teachers become more sensitive to all children's needs, the Adlerian consultant is bringing developmental guidance into every classroom. He is essentially nurturing a school-wide program of guidance services (Hoyt, 1967). As Montagu (1950) states:

> We must shift the emphasis for the three R's to the fourth R, human relations, and place it first, foremost, and always in the order of importance as a principle reason for the existence of the school.

Community Child Guidance Centers

Community Child Guidance Centers represent one medium within which the elementary school counselor can have a tremendous influence on the home environment of many children. These centers, located throughout the United States, are outgrowths of Alfred Adler's Centers for the Guidance of Parents, founded in Vienna in the 1920's. The main purpose of the Community Child Guidance Centers is not to treat, but to instruct parents and children in new, mutually-satisfying patterns of family relationships (Dreikurs, et al., 1959).

Centers may be set up in schools, churches, YMCAs; literally

anywhere there is room for a playground and a large counseling room. Counseling sessions are usually held once a week for approximately two hours, with a large number of parents and other interested persons freely invited to attend as observers. At the opening hour, the staff members, parents, and visitors enter the counseling room. Chairs are usually arranged in a semi-circle, half-surrounding the table behind which the counselor and other staff members are seated. At this time, the children of the families to be counseled enter the playroom, where they are greeted by the playroom director.

Usually two families are counseled in each two hour session. No family members are counseled until they attend at least two to four sessions as observers. In a typical counseling session parents and children are interviewed separately, after which the playroom worker reports on the behavior of the children in the playroom. The counselor then discusses the family dynamics with the parents and observers, finally giving his impressions and recommendations to the parents. The parents are invited to attend future counseling sessions as observers, and may be scheduled for followup sessions on an as-needed basis (Dreikurs, et al., 1959, p. ix).

While the primary concern of these counseling sessions is with immediate problems and their improvement, the ultimate goal is that the parents will establish better family relationships and acquire a new approach for dealing with children (Dreikurs, et al., 1959, p. 33). The indirect effects on the children have been consistently favorable.

Most elementary school counselors are wary of the idea of having a group of laymen observe a counseling session. But the cooperative, educational emphasis of the Adlerian approach makes it advantageous to counsel within a group setting. Not only do participants become more insightful, but observers also understand more about themselves and their families (Dreikurs, et al., 1959, p. vii). In fact, it has been estimated that eighty to ninety percent of the observers can make direct use of the information generated from any one counseling session (Christensen, 1972). The value of this approach should be obvious to the elementary school counselor.

Family Counseling

Adlerian counselors often employ individual family counseling procedures similar to those conducted at Community Child Guidance Centers. Counseling the family as a unit is an excellent means of examining sibling interaction patterns. The way each child interacts with siblings and parents gives a clue to his interpretation of his place within the family. This information is invaluable if the counselor is to understand a child's lifestyle. The counselor's subsequent disclosure of the purpose of the child's actions often enables a child to understand and redirect his own behavior.

When the parents are counseled apart from the children, the session usually follows four distinct steps. First, a warm, cooperative relationship should be established between the counselor and the parents. Next, the counselor must understand the parents and their unique relationship with their child. After the counselor realizes the family dynamics, he must help the

parents understand the effects of their own interactions on the child. The last step involves the reorientation of the parents' attitudes and behaviors toward their child (Sonstegard, 1964, p.73).

Adlerian counselors often counsel all the children in a family without the parents. The purpose is usually to facilitate and encourage effective, respectful communication among siblings. One useful variation of this procedure is to combine the children from several families into one group for the purpose of learning how to cooperate as a family. With this procedure, no child is singled out as being "bad," since each child's difficulty is seen as a family problem, and therefore put in proper perspective (Hillman, 1972). Again, a group procedure such as this allows the elementary school counselor to make contact with a number of normal children in a beneficial manner.

Group Counseling

Adlerians have traditionally found it helpful to work with children in groups. The time saved in group counseling with elementary school children can be considerable. Also, the social context of the group provides advantages over individual counseling. A child, for example, develops his self-concept through his interactions with others. A counselor can, thus, best understand children and encourage developmental growth in a group setting.

The group has special significance for understanding and helping unhappy or maladjusted children, since most of their problems are basically social. Group feedback enables the

development of new behavioral approaches to social problems. The group not only provides an opportunity for children to learn to get along with others, but also gives children a chance to discover that their feelings are not so different from those around them (Dinkmeyer, 1968).

The most encouraging aspect of group counseling is its potential usefulness with all children. Dinkmeyer (1968) states that group counseling provides elementary school children the opportunity "to develop a feeling of equality, confidence, courage, and adequacy; to release negative feelings; to work out role identities; and to be loved" (p. 272).

Mention should be made of the importance of structure in Adlerian group counseling. Without structure, group interaction may easily become nonproductive and even chaotic. The format of Adlerian group counseling is similar to that of Adlerian counseling in general, in that it consists of: (1) establishing and maintaining a relationship with the children as a democratic group leader; (2) examining and attempting to understand the purpose of each child's behavior; (3) revealing to each child his goals (called psychological disclosure); and (4) reorientation, which allows the child to test new perceptions and attitudes.

Educational Focus

The helping professions have traditionally treated useful counseling skills as if they were secrets to be closely guarded. "Experts" have not attempted to share their skills with those who have the most contact with children, namely parents and teachers. Conversely, education is a basic

ingredient of the Adlerian model. The Adlerian counselor attempts to help parents, teachers, administrators, and youth workers gain a workable knowledge of Adlerian theory. In so doing, the scope of guidance can be expanded to encompass both the child's school and home environment.

How can Adlerian theory and skills best be put across? Teacher in-service training seems one likely method for the elementary school counselor to consider. Adler (1931) himself states that "we can make teachers the instruments of social progress by training them to correct mistakes made in the family." Most teachers realize the need for a more practical understanding of children's behavior. A systematic presentation of such knowledge is long overdue.

Several communities have attempted to train both parents and teachers through Community Parent-Teacher Education Centers (Dreikurs, et al., 1959; Hillman, 1968). These centers function much like Community Child Guidance Centers in their family counseling approach. In addition, they offer teacher and counselor training services. Because of their educational emphasis, Community Parent-Teacher Education Centers can become focal points for preventative community programs for parents and teachers. These Centers can also provide an excellent referral source for elementary school counselors within the school district (Hillman, 1968, p. 116).

In terms of guidance education, the child himself must not be overlooked. Therefore, prepackaged guidance materials are becoming more and more popular as developmental learning aids.

One such kit, Developing Understanding of Self and Others (DUSO) (American Guidance Service, 1972), seems particularily useful for the elementary classroom teacher. The DUSO kit, consistent with Adlerian theory, is a program of planned experiences and materials designed to stimulate the child's social and emotional development. Activities include role playing, puppetry, group discussion, problem situations, music and art (American Guidance Service, 1972, p. 53). The DUSO kit represents another important step in bringing guidance into the classroom.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined Adlerian strategies that the elementary school counselor may find helpful in broadening the scope of elementary school guidance. All children can benefit from exposure to developmental guidance. However, unless the elementary school counselor incorporates more efficient, effective methods for reaching all children, elementary school guidance may find itself resigned to a strictly remedial role.

Since a child's experience is influenced by his entire social environment, no one guidance strategy can be considered a panacea. Only with a coordinated effort to incorporate a number of guidance roles will the elementary school counselor begin to make a far-reaching impact on the child, his home and school environment. Several coordinated Adlerian approaches, using strategies outlined in the present paper, have already produced gratifying results (Hillman, 1967; Platt, 1971). Similar efforts should be considered by elementary school counselors dedicated to preparing all children to live in our complicated world.

References

ACES-ASCA Joint Committee on the Elementary School Counselor report. April, 1966.

Adler, A. What life should mean to you. New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1931.

American Guidance Service. 1972 tests and educational materials catalog. Circle Pines, Minn.: American Guidance Services, 1972.

Christensen, O.C. Family education: A model for consultation. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 1972, 7, 121-129.

Dinkmeyer, D. Conceptual foundations of counseling: Adlerian theory and practice, The School Counselor, 1964, 11, 174-178.

Dinkmeyer, D., Ed. Guidance and counseling in the elementary school. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Dreikurs, R., et al. Adlerian family counseling: A manual for counseling centers. Eugene, Ore.: University Press, 1959.

Dreikurs, R. & Grey, L. Logical consequences. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1968.

Dreikurs, R. & Soltz, V. Children: The challenge. New York: Meredith Press, 1964.

Hillman, B.W. The elementary school counseling process: An adlerian model. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 1967, 2, 102-113.

Hillman, B.W. The parent-teacher education center: A supplement to elementary school Counseling. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 1968, 3(2), 111-117.

Hillman, B.W. The family constellation: A clue to the behavior of elementary school children. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 1972, 7, 20-25.

Hoyt, K.B. Some thoughts on elementary school guidance. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 1967, 1, 91-102.

Kaczkowski, H. The elementary school counselor as consultant, Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 1967, 1, 103-111.

Montagu, A. On being human. New York: H. Schuman, 1950.

Platt, J.M. Efficacy of the adlerian model in elementary school counseling. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 1971, 6, 86-91.

Sonstegard, M.A. A rationale for interviewing parents. The School Counselor, 1964, 12, 72-76.